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BULLETIN

OF

THE PENNSYLVANIA MUSEUM

APRIL, 1913

ELEVENTH YEAR

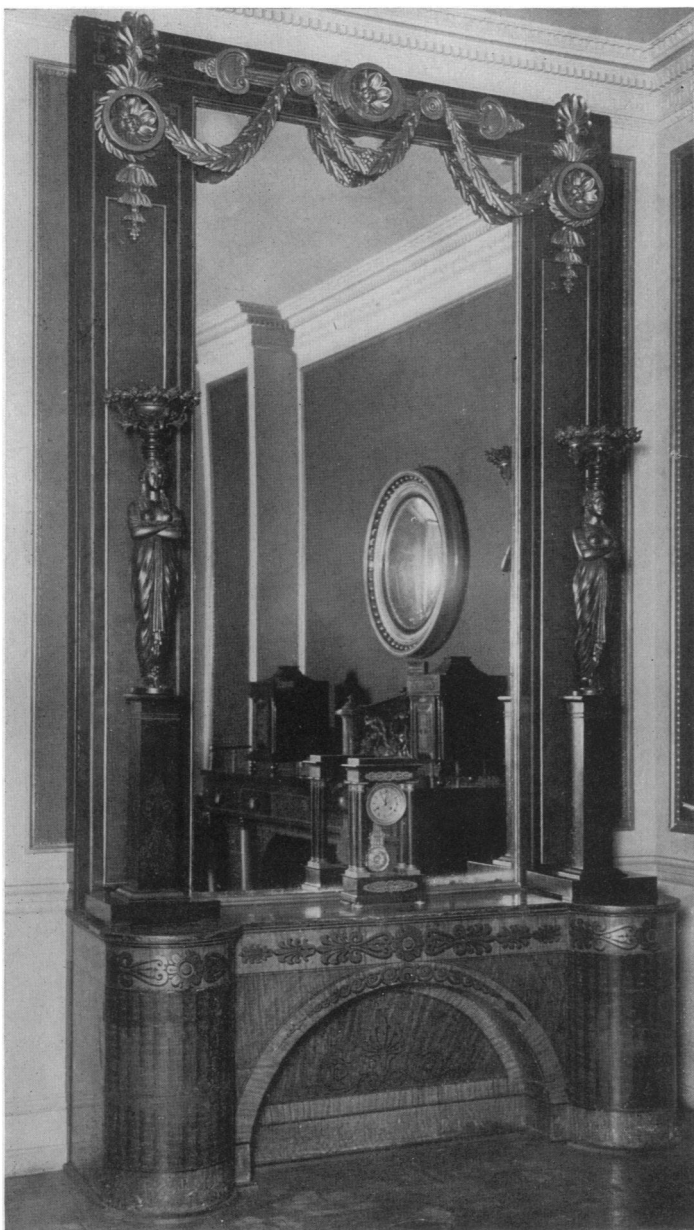
Number 42

TWO PIECES OF EMPIRE FURNITURE

Owing to the death in 1911 of Mrs. Oliver Hopkinson and to the consequent breaking up of the home occupied by the family at 1424 Spruce street, the Pennsylvania Museum has been enabled to secure two handsome pieces of furniture of the Empire period. These form an important addition to the alcove assigned at Memorial Hall to that order of furniture, of the collection of which the superb sideboard bequeathed by the late Miss Elizabeth Gratz to the Museum in the main formed the nucleus.

The pieces referred to are a large pier mirror framed in wood and ornamented with heavy gilt garlands and other designs in the style of the period. The glass of old French plate is set up on a low massive stand or low console two feet six inches in height, with fluted columns of light wood. Two stiff, draped female figures three feet high, bearing baskets on their heads and standing on wood and gilt pedestals two feet one inch high, rise on either side and add to the dignity of the piece. As a whole, the latter stands eleven feet from the floor. It is six feet in width. It came into the possession of the Hopkinson family through Mr. Oliver Hopkinson's marriage in 1847 with Miss Eliza Swaim. Her father, Dr. William Swaim, who died in 1846, had imported it from England. Dr. Swaim fought as Captain in the War of 1812. He was of Huguenot descent, and his ancestors had settled in Connecticut early in the seventeenth century. One of Mrs. Oliver Hopkinson's forebears was a member of the First General Court (the name given the Legislature in the new colonies), held at Hartford in 1636. Mr. Oliver Hopkinson died in 1905, his widow surviving him six years.

The second piece of furniture, a mahogany wall table with gray marble top and columns, and ormolu decorative plaques, is a very fine example of the Empire style. It once belonged to Governor De Witt Clinton of New York, who died at Albany in 1828. It is three feet high by three feet six inches in width. How it came into the possession of the Swaim family is unrecorded otherwise than by tradition. It was given to Mrs. Hopkinson by Mrs. Catharine Swaim, widow of James Swaim and son of Dr. William Swaim and a half brother of Mrs. Oliver Hopkinson. Mrs. Catharine Swaim died in 1875. James Swaim had received it from his father, who died at his residence southeast corner of Seventh and Chestnut streets in 1846.



PIER MIRROR
Early Nineteenth Century



WALL TABLE
Formerly Owned by Governor De Witt Clinton

It is from the same sale that a fine Guarnerius violin passed from the hands of the Hopkinson family, of which it was a valued heirloom, into those of Mr. Thaddeus Rich, soloist of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and this recalls the fact that the men of the Hopkinson family for several generations have been skilled musicians, as well as noted statesmen and leading figures in the social, literary and political life of the community. The Hopkinson heirlooms, however, were in the main either distributed by will, or purchased by the members of the family. A good piece of Clignancourt porcelain was also secured, which is described elsewhere.

S. Y. S.